

Sino-Russian Confidence Building Measures: A Preliminary Analysis

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Abstract

The recently concluded Sino-Russian agreements on resolving border disputes and on force reductions provide an interesting case study of how confidence building measures (CBMs), both as a process and outcomes of bilateral negotiations between former adversaries, can contribute to regional security and stability. It is observed that Sino-Russian CBMs, while incorporating many of the features of the European model, are nevertheless unique in their development in that their integration into the security framework has been facilitated by an overall improving bilateral politico-economic relationship and the political commitments from the two countries' top leaderships, and their evolution has been marked by incrementalism, informality, and unilateral asymmetric disarmament on the part of the Soviet Union/Russia. The longer-term test of the durability of these CBMs will likely depend on the future developments of the Sino-Russian political relationship that, for the time being, remains one of convenience and based on short-term interests.

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I. Introduction

The past five years have seen a steady improvement and consolidation of Sino-Russian relations. Since President Boris Yeltsin's official visit to China in December 1992 and up to the latest (fifth) summit in Beijing in November 1997, the Sino-Russian entente has rapidly developed from an initial "good-neighborly relationship" to a "constructive partnership," and further to what is now officially described as a "strategic partnership of equality and trust oriented toward the 21st century."¹ This renewed friendship (both disavow an alliance) has been marked by regular summit meetings between the heads of states, annual prime ministerial visits (since 1994), military cooperation highlighted by Russian arms sales and defense technology transfers, growing bilateral trade, the resolution of most of their border disputes, and the development of confidence building measures (CBMs) in the border regions. Indeed, with the removal of such obstacles as ideological contention, border disputes, and military confrontation, Sino-Russian relations have entered a new era.²

Of the various aspects of this new relationship, the development and establishment of confidence building measures in the military field has been of particular significance. In fact, both the Chinese and Russians have claimed the recently concluded Shanghai and Moscow Agreements on CBMs and border force reductions as a clear indication of the determination to move beyond the "cold war mentality" and establish a truly equitable inter-state relationship based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. The assertion that "China and Russia are taking the lead" in regional CBMs has even been echoed in the region's defense analysis community in that the Shanghai Agreement, for example, has been described as the first of its kind on common security and non-aggression in the Asia-Pacific region since World War II.³

Given that China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s were locked in an animosity marked by ideological contentions, intense border disputes and occasional military confrontation, and high concentrations of military forces in the border regions, their apparent success in lowering tension, resolving most of the border disputes, and significantly reducing forces in the border areas clearly warrants careful study. Among the key questions that need to be addressed is whether, and to what extent, confidence-building measures can be seen as an important contributing factor underlying the improvement of the bilateral relationship. In other words, how relevant are CBMs in fostering common and cooperative security relationships among states?

This paper attempts to address these questions in a preliminary way. After a discussion of the background against which the Sino-Russian negotiations of both the Shanghai and Moscow Agreements have proceeded over the past seven years, I try to identify some of the principal Chinese stands and strategies in the negotiation processes and the evolution of Sino-Russian CBMs. This will be followed by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the two agreements, bearing in mind that any comparison (e.g., with the Vienna Document of 1994) of necessity will tend to be arbitrary and incomplete given their different settings in terms of the conflict history, policy priorities, and motivations for negotiation. A final section discusses some of the difficulties in implementation and speculates on the prospects of Sino-Russian CBMs in the years to come.

¹ Xia Yishan, "Sino-Russian Partnership Marching Into 21st Century," *Beijing Review*, 5-11 May 1997, p.9.

² Ju Mengjun, "Duojihua shijiezhongde zhong'er guanxi [Sino-Russian Relations in the Multipolarization of the World]," *Liaowang Weekly*, 21 April 1997, p.41; Shi Ze, "Lun xinshiqide zhong'er guanxi [On Sino-Russian Relations in the New Era]," *Guoji wenti yanjiu [Journal of International Studies]* (September 1995), pp.1-6.

³ John Zeng, "The new Sino-Russian partnership," *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* (May-June 1996), pp.12-13.

II. Road to Normalization: Background of Sino-Russian CBMs

Ideological contentions, border disputes, and military confrontation marked Sino-Soviet relations from the early 1960s to the 1980s. The two countries share a border stretching 4,670 miles from the Sea of Japan in the east to Afghanistan to the west. Historically, China claimed the deprivation of over 1.5 million square km through a number of unequal treaties signed between the debilitated Qing Dynasty and the expanding Tsarist Russia in the 19th century. These historical grievances interacted with and reinforced the worst times of Beijing-Moscow relations and served as a major point of contention between the two over a quarter of a century between the late 1950s and early 1980s.⁴ To a significant extent, border disputes can be correlated with the ups and downs of the bilateral political relationship but such disputes were rarely put forward as clear articulation of each party's claims based on existing treaties and in accordance with international law.⁵

Unresolved border disputes, coupled with other contentious issues in bilateral relations, pitted Beijing against Moscow in a most acrimonious way. Neither side ever had the slightest interest in resolving the issues through serious negotiations. While from time to time China raised the issue of disputed borders with the Soviet Union, the latter refused to acknowledge that these disputes ever existed. Indeed, as one keen observer suggested, the Soviet Union actually "tolerated" more than a few Chinese intrusions. The Soviets went so far as to grant permission to Chinese fishermen during times of amicable relations (the 1950s) and politely yet resolutely turned the Chinese back after relations soured.⁶ Force was seldom used in these days until the late 1960s when the bilateral relationship deteriorated to its lowest point. Eventually, the relationship turned to open military confrontation, where the two parties briefly exchanged fire over a small island (Zhenbao Dao to the Chinese and Damansky to the Soviets).

The military clash and the risk of escalation led to a cooling off on both sides. During the Zhou-Kosygin meeting of September 1969, the Chinese side proposed, and the Soviet side agreed, that ideological differences should not be an obstacle to normal state-to-state relations; that the two sides should not go to war over border disputes; that negotiations on border issues should proceed under non-threatening circumstances; and that the two sides should reach interim agreements on maintaining the border status quo (actual line of control), preventing military conflicts, and undertaking military disengagement from the border areas.⁷ Negotiations were subsequently held from 1969 to 1978. However, as the general political environment remained unchanged and indeed even deteriorated toward the late 1970s, neither side was in a mood to "compromise" and conduct "business-like" talks. Indeed, the Chinese side accused Moscow of stalling and placing obstacles in border negotiations. In particular, the Soviet side was charged with rejecting the Chinese proposal for military disengagement in the contended border areas.⁸

Meanwhile, each side continued to view the other as its greatest security threat. Moscow was wary of the quasi Beijing-Tokyo-Washington anti-Soviet alliance and, given the strategic importance of the Far East, began to increase its military presence in the region. Beijing, on the other hand, was even more worried; security against Soviet invasion, the preparation for "an early, major, and nuclear war," and the very survival of the country were the focal points of national security policy. Under such circumstances, the Soviet use of the Can Ram Bay naval base in Vietnam, its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and Moscow's cozy relationship with New Delhi were interpreted as the Soviet encirclement of China by means of a "southward strategy." As a consequence, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, the two countries carried out massive troop buildups along the Sino-Soviet border. By 1983, Soviet ground

⁴ Alexei D. Voskressenski, *The Difficult Border: Current Russian and Chinese Concepts of Sino-Russian Relations, and Frontier Problems* (Commack, New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996).

⁵ George Ginsburgs, "The End of the Sino-Russian Territorial Disputes?" *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* Vol.VII, No.1 (Winter/Spring 1993), pp.261-320.

⁶ Ginsburg, "The End of the Sino-Russian Territorial Disputes?" *passim*.

⁷ Li Huichuan, "Zhongsu bianjie tanpan de zhengjie hezai [Where Lies the Root of Deadlock in the Sino-Soviet Frontier Talks?]" *Guoji wenti yanjiu [Journal of International Studies]* (July 1981), p.15.

⁸ Li, "Where Lies the Root of Deadlock in the Sino-Soviet Frontier Talks?" p.16.

forces in the Far East had reached a level of 52 divisions, and its Pacific Fleet was the strongest in the Soviet Navy; the Chinese had also deployed 78 divisions by 1980.⁹ With the exception of the demilitarized zones (DMZs) on the Korean peninsula, this was perhaps the heavily defended border in Asia.

The early 1980s began to witness a relaxation of bilateral relations as a result of mostly unilateral initiatives from both sides. These initiatives took the form of trial balloons, good-will gestures, and willingness to make concessions. With the adoption of its “independent foreign policy” in 1982, a gradual change evolved in Beijing’s approach to Sino-Soviet relations. Indeed, while strong “anti-hegemonism” (a reference to Soviet foreign policy) rhetoric continued to feature prominently in the Chinese press, Beijing began to gain increasing confidence regarding the potential Soviet threat to China.¹⁰ On the Soviet side, the end of the Brezhnev era and the uncertain power transition obliged Moscow to play down ideological rhetoric and probe possibilities of returning the Sino-Soviet relationship to a more normal status. Both countries began to loosen their grip on bilateral trade and educational and cultural exchanges in an attempt to restore a normal relationship. However, Beijing stuck to the so-called three preconditions for normalizing the bilateral political relationship: withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; reduction and withdrawal of troops from Mongolia and along the Sino-Soviet border; and cessation of Soviet support for Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia.

That the Chinese side insisted that the Soviet Union remove these three obstacles as preconditions for normalization of bilateral relationship should be understood in the context of Beijing’s overall strategy to improve its security environment. The meeting of the first two conditions would mean that the Soviet Union would have reduced the level of deployment in areas that posed direct threats to Chinese security; the third condition would be a test of Soviet political will as well as a tactic to isolate Vietnam. The rationale for this strategy may have come from an understanding of the Soviet Union’s apparent difficulty in superpower competition, which provided China with leverage to demand prior concessions. One could also construe China’s move as a realistic assessment of the Sino-Soviet military balance and, given China’s inferior position, a level playing field required that Moscow make the first concessionary move.

Drastic policy initiatives came from the Soviet Union with the accession to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. In two major speeches in Vladivostok (July 1986) and Krasnoyarsk (September 1988), Gorbachev indicated a desire to normalize relations with the region, including with China. In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev indicated that he might be willing to consider China’s demands for improving relations. Included in this good-will gesture was the plan to withdraw six regiments from Afghanistan and the expressed intention to withdraw ‘a substantial part’ of Soviet troops from Mongolia. However, what proved to be most significant in Gorbachev’s speech, as far as the Chinese were concerned, was the hint that the Soviet Union might consider using the median line of the navigational channel of the Amur-Ussuri River as the border-line between the two countries, a position that Beijing had long insisted on but an issue that had never been endorsed by Moscow. This was clearly a concession on the part of the Soviet Union.¹¹

The Vladivostok speech represented a major departure from previous Soviet policy toward Asia in general and toward China in particular. The significance of this new initiative reflected Gorbachev’s “new thinking” in Soviet foreign policy, at a time when superpower competition had apparently shifted in Washington’s favor and when Gorbachev realized that the years of stagnation under Brezhnev necessitated a major policy shift. This shift called for a number of specific tactical changes, including an effort to improve relations with NATO’s West European member states and with China in the Far East. In other words, the Soviet Union needed some breathing space to reassess its own domestic problems and decide new priorities, one of which being the effort, through conciliatory gestures, to work toward an improved relationship with China. As one analyst suggested, Gorbachev’s new policy initiative toward

⁹ Harry Gelman, “The Siberian Military Buildup and the Sino-Soviet-US Triangle,” in Rodger Swearingen, ed., *Siberia and the Soviet Far East: Strategic Dimensions in Multinational Perspective* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), pp.179-225; Gerald Segal, *The Soviet Union and the Pacific* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p.89.

¹⁰ Sanqiang Jian, *Foreign Policy Restructuring as Adaptive Behavior: China’s Independence Foreign Policy 1982-1989* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1996), chap. 8.

¹¹ Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl and Melvin A. Goodman, “Gorbachev’s ‘New Directions’ in Asia,” *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* Vol.VIII, No.3 (Fall 1989), p.5.

China “was only the first step toward a larger, more ambitious design in East Asia: the creation of a ‘collective security’ arrangement among socialist countries in the region against the United States and Japan.”¹²

The Chinese were also making important policy reevaluations at this juncture. Assessing the general international security environment, in particular the superpower arms race stalemate, the Chinese leadership under Deng Xiaoping concluded that the Soviet Union, given its difficulties, posed less of a threat to China, and certainly not one in the form of land invasion. The enlarged session of the Central Military Commission (CMC) decided in 1985 that the country’s security policy could now shift from preparation for imminent military confrontation to peace-time defense modernization in subordination to economic development. One million of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) regular forces were to be demobilized in 1985-87. Under such circumstances, Gorbachev’s olive branch was not to be turned down. Beijing responded to Gorbachev’s Vladivostok speech by stating that China noticed the “new elements” in Soviet positions, and announced in September 1986 agreement that it would resume boundary talks with the Soviets for the first time in nine years, with Vice-Foreign Minister Qian Qichen heading the Chinese delegation to Moscow during the weeks of 9-23 February 1987. Two businesslike sessions were subsequently held in 1987. The two sides expressed “mutual satisfaction” after the end of the first round over the resumption of border negotiations, with the Chinese side calling for “a ‘comprehensive and equitable [*quanmian heli*]’ settlement of the dispute, ... a phrase which suggest[ed] rather more than the minor adjustments the Soviets [had] traditionally favoured,” and announced an agreement to discuss the entire boundary, beginning with the eastern section.¹³ The second round of negotiations, in August 1987, concluded with a major breakthrough in that the two sides concurred that the border disputes would be settled based on existing treaties and “in conformity with the principle of demarcation along the middle of the main fairway on navigable rivers or the middle of the river or its main channel on non-navigable rivers.”¹⁴

There were other factors as well that prompted China to pursue a more normal relationship with the Soviet Union. One of these was an apparently new configuration of the superpower relationship that began to shift from fierce arms races to renewed efforts at arms control and reductions. As Moscow and Washington moved toward achieving landmark arms reduction results (i.e., the INF Treaty), Beijing clearly saw the dynamics of the shifting China-US-USSR relationships.¹⁵ As one Chinese analyst observed, “[t]he development of Sino-Soviet relations has obviously lagged behind that of US-Soviet and European-Soviet relations. In this situation, should Sino-Soviet relations continue to be abnormal, it would be harmful not only to the reform and economic development of China and the Soviet Union, but also to the maintenance of the overall balance of the international strategic pattern.”¹⁶

The end of the Cold War presented Beijing with a mixed security environment. On the one hand, the disintegration of the Soviet Union removed a serious security threat to China. On the other hand, however, the fact that communism had collapsed in the former Soviet Union (FSU) states and was being replaced with capitalist democratic systems posed a challenge of ideological incongruence. At the same time, the Sino-Soviet border negotiations, which since 1987 had proceeded smoothly although slowly, now encountered the reality of added actors and hence increased complexities for negotiation. And finally, Beijing was particularly wary of the new Central Asian republics for obvious reasons: common ethnic heritage and resurgent Islam could fan the revival of ethno-nationalism (there already was ethnic unrest in Xinjiang) and serve as a rallying call for secessionist movements in China’s northwestern region, a region which is of considerable strategic importance as it hosts China’s key nuclear testing and missile launching sites.¹⁷ As one renowned Sinologist pointed out: “China found itself with three new

¹² Hunt P. Nguyen, “Russia and China: The Genesis of an Eastern Rapallo,” *Asian Survey* Vol.XXXIII, No.3 (March 1993), p.288.

¹³ William deB. Mills, “Baiting the Chinese Dragon: Sino-Soviet Relations after Vladivostok,” *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* Vol.VI, No.3 (Fall 1987), pp.5-6; Ededahl and Goodman, “Gorbachev’s ‘New Directions’ in Asia,” p.7.

¹⁴ Ginsburgs, “The End of the Sino-Russian Territorial Disputes?” p.261.

¹⁵ John W. Garver, “The ‘New Type’ of Sino-Soviet Relations,” *Asian Survey* Vol.XXIX, No.12 (December 1989), p.1140.

¹⁶ Yu Gang, “World Impact of Sino-Soviet Normalization,” *Beijing Review*, 8-14 May 1989, p.16.

¹⁷ Robert Karniol, “Beijing faces challenge from reawakened ethnic interests,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly* (hereafter *JDW*), 9 October 1993, p.19; Ya-chun Chang, “Dangqian zhonggong yu erluosi de guanxi [Current Peking-Moscow Relations],” *Zhongguo dalu yanjiu* [Mainland

bordering states in Central Asia and had to improvise a policy where none had existed in this century.... Apart from the obvious conclusion that China will be more vigilant about its borderlands, one can also assume that major troop reductions achieved on the frontier with Russia will in part allow a relocation to Central Asia.¹⁸

One of China's strategic responses to the traumatic changes in the former Soviet Union was to attempt to smooth the transition from the Sino-Soviet to a Sino-Russian relationship. A good, amicable working relationship was necessary because Beijing realized that given the domestic developments in Russia, especially Moscow's clearly pro-Western stance in the early 1990s, China needed to establish a relationship with Russia that would minimize the potential conflicts arising from ideologies while maximizing mutual benefits. Only a politically cordial relationship could facilitate the reduction of military tension in the border areas, and eventually result in real troop reductions and confidence building measures, all of which would be beneficial to Chinese security interests. This underlined Beijing's efforts to establish a good-neighborly relationship with Russia, through increased political, economic, and military exchanges and contacts.¹⁹

Parallel with the developments in border negotiations and diminished tensions were other initiatives taken by both sides to improve bilateral relations. These included the gradual normalization of a state-to-state relationship devoid of the usual acrimonious exchanges of accusations, exchanges of visits at the vice-prime ministerial level, and a barter trade growing to some \$3 billion annually in the late 1980s.²⁰ With the Soviet Union moving toward meeting China's three preconditions, the way was paved for the Deng-Gorbachev summit in May 1989 and the restoration of both state and party relations between Beijing and Moscow. Sino-Soviet relations entered a new phase, which has since weathered the Tiananmen upheaval, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the drastic domestic changes within Russia, and evolved into a new strategic partnership between China and Russia.²¹

III. The Process of CBM Negotiation: Chinese Objectives and Strategies

Chinese attitudes to confidence building have shifted from suspicion to guarded endorsement over the past decade. However, reflecting a *holistic* approach to security and arms control issues, China has maintained that military CBMs only form one (albeit an important) aspect of overall inter-state relationships. In other words, attempts at military CBMs probably would not go very far if not accompanied by an overall improvement in trust and confidence in the political, economic, and social spheres. The usefulness of military CBMs is measured against the political commitment to improve the security relationship and consolidate that process. Another characteristic of recent Chinese approaches is the advocacy for a step-by-step approach rather than an over-ambitious, all encompassing package-deal method. Trust must be built starting with the relatively easier issues where commonalities may already more than outweigh differences. Yet a third characteristic is to lay down certain markers for the negotiating counterpart to meet as a test of the other's sincerity in wanting to achieve substantive results.²²

China Studies] Vol.36, No.12 (December 1993), p.70; J. Richard Walsh, "China and the New Geopolitics of Central Asia," *Asian Survey* Vol. XXXIII, No.3 (March 1993), p.274

¹⁸ Gerald Segal, "China and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union," *Asian Survey* Vol. XXXII, No.9 (September 1992), pp.855, 857.

¹⁹ Huang Hong-bo, "Houlengzhang shiqi zhonggong yu erluosi hudong guanxi zhi yanjiu [A Study of Sino-Russian Relations in the Post-Cold War Era]," *Gongdang wenti yanjiu [Studies in Communism]* Vol.21, No.9 (September 1995), pp.5-7.

²⁰ Ededahl and Goodman, "Gorbachev's 'New Directions' in Asia," p.6.

²¹ James Clay Moltz, "From Military Adversaries to Economic Partners: Russia and China in the New Asia," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* Vol. IX, No.1 (Winter/Spring 1995), pp.157-182; Rajan Menon, "The Strategic Convergence Between Russia and China," *Survival* Vol.39, No.2 (Summer 1997), pp.101-125.

²² Liu Huaqiu, "Step-By-Step Confidence and Security Building for the Asian Region: A Chinese Perspective," in Ralph A. Cossa, ed., *Asia Pacific Confidence and Security Building Measures* (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995), pp.119-136; Si Chu, "Confidence-Building in Asia-Pacific," *Beijing Review*, 4-10 March 1991, pp.15-16.

This understanding of basic Chinese approaches helps us to analyze both China's major agendas and specific policies in negotiating CBMs with the Soviet Union/Russia. This would demonstrate that China's approaches tend to be multi-dimensional, with military tension regarded as the symptom rather than the cause of an adversarial political relationship. However, this is not to say that the reduction of military tension would not contribute to an improved relationship. Indeed, the Chinese had early on called for stabilization of the border and reduction of military tension (although it is not clear if this was only for propaganda purposes, as similar Soviet calls were rejected as such by Beijing). The Sino-Soviet strategic balance was seen as favoring the Soviet side and therefore demands for unilateral Soviet concessions in this regard would both reduce China's sense of insecurity and demonstrate the Soviet political will to seriously take steps to improve bilateral relations. These included the reduction of Soviet strategic and conventional force superiority. China's negotiating agendas, as far as normalization was concerned, therefore consisted of the three afore-mentioned conditions. In this way, the Chinese actually pursued CBMs on a number of fronts. Negotiations on border demarcation and force reductions were only one aspect of an overall, holistic approach toward turning the Sino-Soviet relationship from an adversarial into a normal and preferably friendly one.

China's grand strategy under other circumstances would probably have been seen by the Soviet Union as only a one-way street and, given the perception (and to some extent partial reality) of a China-US alliance, would probably have been rejected as a non-starter. But the times had changed with Gorbachev's accession to power and the subsequent major foreign policy shifts. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that in a confrontational situation the superior side would hardly be willing to cede that advantage and hence that CBMs would be difficult to start with,²³ the Soviet Union under Gorbachev actually took a number of initiatives, either in the superpower arms control context, or unilaterally, or as responses to Chinese concerns, that eventually resulted in Soviet unilateral concessions to Chinese demands. This included the removal of Soviet SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles deployed in the Far East, drastic force reductions in the Far East and along the Sino-Soviet border, and agreement to hold bilateral negotiations on military CBMs in the border regions with China.

The US-Soviet INF negotiations concerned China in three respects. One was whether reduction or elimination of the SS-20s in the European theatre would mean their transfer to the Far East. The second was whether a "single-zero" outcome would leave intact the Soviet Asia-based SS-20, especially those deployed near the Sino-Soviet border. A third was whether the Soviets would insist on including the British and French nuclear forces in the overall calculation during negotiations, bringing with it the prospect of forcing China also to participate. Hence China strongly insisted on a "double-zero" position and supported the positions of Great Britain and France refusing their inclusion. Meanwhile, Beijing also indicated that the Soviet position on the INF issue would affect the process of Sino-Soviet rapprochement. One *Renmin Ribao* commentary made this clear: "China has asked the Soviet Union to remove three hurdles in the way of developing relations... One of the hurdles is the Soviet armed forces in the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian border areas, and *that naturally includes the missiles.*"²⁴ In other words, China's security interests had to be addressed. By late 1987, the Soviet Union eventually agreed to a unilateral destruction of the 180 SS-20s, and 256 other medium- and short-range missiles deployed in East Asia.²⁵

Soviet deployments of forces in the Far East were another "hot issue" for Beijing. Gorbachev lost no time in also addressing this Chinese concern. In his speech at the United Nations in December 1988, Gorbachev announced Moscow's intention to make substantial force reductions along the Sino-

²³ Consider this statement by a Chilean general: "The sensation of mistrust will always be felt more strongly by the weaker party to a conflict ... [and] confidence-building measures may heighten the weaker nation's sense of defenselessness. To avert these perceptions, CBMs must be designed in such a way as to provide real reductions in tension, demanding more of the party claiming superiority to ensure adequate balance. This goal, however, appears to be unrealistic; no nation will agree to reduce its capabilities further than its opponent." Quoted in Marie-France Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures*. Adelphi Paper No. 307 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for IISS, 1996), p.30.

²⁴ J. Mohan Malik, "China and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Talks," *Arms Control* Vol.10, No.3 (December 1989), pp.235-274; quote cited at p.242.

²⁵ James Clay Moltz, "Regional Tensions in the Russo-Chinese Rapprochement," *Asian Survey* Vol.XXXV, No.6 (June 1995), p.515.

Soviet border as part of the overall package of the unilateral 500,000-force reduction. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze further elaborated on this plan during his February 1989 visit to Beijing, informing his Chinese host that the Soviet Union would reduce the numerical strength of its troops in the Far East by 200,000 together with a pledge to withdraw three-fourths of its troops in Mongolia. At the same time, the Soviet troops in the Sino-Soviet border areas would be restructured into a defensive posture.²⁶ Meanwhile, the Soviet Union also proceeded with the scheduled withdrawal from Afghanistan, which was completed in early 1989. Unilateral Soviet troop withdrawal continued after the 1989 summit and by the early 1990s; the total force level in the Far East had been reduced by 250,000 (including complete withdrawal of the 120,000 troops previously stationed in Mongolia); and the Pacific Fleet was cut by a third.²⁷

With significant unilateral Soviet arms reductions well underway and hence a demonstration of the political will of the Soviet leadership, the two sides began bilateral negotiations on military CBMs, at first gradually in the wake of the Gorbachev-Deng summit and moving in earnest into high gear with the smooth transition from the Sino-Soviet to Sino-Russian relationship in late 1992, culminating in President Yeltsin's first official visit to China in December. Two parallel negotiations proceeded: one dealing with border issues and demarcations, and the other with CBMs in the military field and with the reduction of armed forces in border areas. Two features mark the seven-year negotiations. One is that, unlike the first generation of CBMs, where the major objectives almost exclusively focused on information exchanges and constraining measures to prevent surprise military attacks, Sino-Russian CBMs are now aimed at consolidating an already improved bilateral political relationship, in addition to performing, although to a lesser extent, these traditional tasks. In other words, CBMs are not used, at least not in a major way, to enhance trust; instead, the political will and determination on both sides to build a friendly bilateral relationship call for a successful conclusion of CBMs and the resolution of border disputes as one aspect of that relationship. Another characteristic is the step-by-step approach, with a series of understandings, agreements, and treaties that accompany official visits and consolidate and institutionalize the progress achieved (See Appendix I).

As mentioned earlier, China and the Soviet Union resumed negotiations on border issues in the wake of Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech where the Soviet leader hinted at concessions. Since the 1989 summit, negotiations had proceeded apace, unlike during the earlier phase where the two sides encountered considerable difficulties and obstacles. The joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of Gorbachev's visit indicated that negotiations on both the eastern and western sectors of the border would be merged and held at the foreign ministerial, rather than the deputy foreign ministerial, level.²⁸ After another two years of negotiations, the Soviet Union and China finally concluded and signed an Agreement on the Eastern Sector of the National Boundaries during Chinese leader Jiang Zemin's May 1991 visit to Moscow.²⁹ This was ratified by the Russian Duma on 13 February 1992 and on 24 February 1992, the Chinese NPC Standing Committee also ratified the treaty. This in effect resolved 98 percent of all bilateral border issues.³⁰ In September 1994, during Jiang's second visit to Moscow, China and Russia signed another agreement on the demarcation of the western sector of the Sino-Russian border (about 55 km long).³¹ With a few remaining issues, including the determination of Heixiazi island, work has now moved toward conducting boundary surveys and erecting boundary markers according to the agreed demarcation line.³²

²⁶ Ekedahl and Goodman, "Gorbachev's 'New Directions' in Asia," pp.8-10.

²⁷ Rajan Menon and Daniel Abele, "Security Dimensions of Soviet Territorial Disputes with China and Japan," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* Vol.XIII, No.1 (Spring 1989), p.11; Moltz, "Regional Tensions," p.516; Ekedahl and Goodman, "Gorbachev's 'New Directions' in Asia," p.19.

²⁸ Ekedahl and Goodman, "Gorbachev's 'New Directions' in Asia," p.7.

²⁹ Moltz, "Regional Tensions," p.516.

³⁰ *Renmin Ribao*[*People's Daily*], 15 February 1992, p.6; Huang, "A Study of Sino-Russian Relations," p.15.

³¹ Pi Ying-hsien, "The Dynamics of Sino-Russian Relations," *Issues & Studies* Vol.32, No.1 (January 1996), p.22; Menon, "The Strategic Convergence Between Russia and China," p.103.

³² Shi Ze, "Sino-Russian Relations Have Entered a New Period," *Renmin Ribao*, 20 April 1996, p.6, in *FBIS-CHI*, 30 April 1996, p.4.

Alongside border demarcation negotiations, arms reductions and other military CBMs were also initiated. During his February 1989 visit to China in preparation for the upcoming Gorbachev-Deng summit, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze proposed that the two sides discuss potential military CBMs, including further reductions of troops and offensive components, limitations of military exercises, and establishment of verification procedures.³³ Gorbachev moved the agenda a step further at the May 1989 summit by suggesting the demilitarization of the border region through bilateral negotiations to reduce troops to the minimum level and “transform the border into a zone of peaceful and friendly interaction.”³⁴ The two sides agreed to set up a joint group of diplomatic and military experts to consider further border troop reductions, with China agreeing to hold the first working level meeting in Moscow in late 1989 to discuss possible reduction of armed forces in border areas and to strengthen “trust in the military sphere.”³⁵

With normalization fully restored, China and the Soviet Union, and later Russia, together with the other three Central Asian republics sharing borders with China, undertook a series of measures to build confidence in the military field, including the signing of a number of formal agreements. In the area of military security, the two countries have reached consensus on the following: no-first-use (NFU) or threat of use of nuclear weapons against each other (de-targeting); reduction of military forces in the border areas to a minimum level compatible with the friendly bilateral relationship; peaceful resolution of disputes, including border demarcation; and restraint from using third-country territories to launch or threaten to launch attacks on the other side.³⁶ These separate yet reinforcing agreements of mutual understanding have been conducted at three levels and embody various declaration, information-exchange, and constraining CBMs. The summits between the heads of states and governments set out the general principles either serving as guidance for the general political direction of negotiations (the political parameter) or culminating in the conclusion of years of negotiations and agreements reached. The military exchanges through regular visits of defense ministers set out the parameters for military cooperation. At the working level, the negotiating teams, with China on one side, and Russia, and after December 1991, also the three Central Asian republics on the other, deal with specific issues. The following provides a brief chronology of some of these developments.

Summit Meetings and Political Commitments

In April 1990, Chinese Premier Li Peng visited the Soviet Union and the two sides signed the Agreement on the Guidelines of Mutual Reduction of Forces and Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Area of the Soviet-Chinese Border. By this agreement, the two sides were committed to “reduc[ing] their military forces to the lowest level suited to normal good neighborly relations between the two countries on an equal basis for mutual security.”³⁷ This document served as the basis for subsequent negotiations and, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, continued to guide negotiations between China, Russia, and the three Central Asian republics which also joined in as successor states to the FSU. President Yeltsin’s landmark visit to China in December 1992 produced over twenty agreements in a wide range of areas, including the Memorandum of Understanding on the Guiding Principles for the Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces and the Strengthening of Trust in the Border Region, and called on China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to complete an agreement pertaining to arms reduction and confidence-building measures along China’s shared borders with the CIS four. The two sides reaffirmed the understanding that they should reduce the armed forces along the border to the lowest level commensurate with friendly relations.³⁸

³³ Menon and Abele, “Security Dimensions,” p.11.

³⁴ Garver, “The ‘New Type’ of Sino-Soviet Relations,” pp.1138-1139.

³⁵ Ekedahl and Goodman, pp.8-10; Ekedahl and Goodman, “Gorbachev’s ‘New Directions’ in Asia,” p.7.

³⁶ Huang, “A Study of Sino-Russian Relations,” p.9.

³⁷ *Xinhua*, Moscow, 26 April 1990; cited in Young-koo Cha and Kang Choi, “Land-based Confidence-Building Measures in Northeast Asia: A South Korean Perspective,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* Vol.VI, No.2 (Winter 1994), p.244.

³⁸ Peggy Falkenheim Meyer, “Russia’s Post-Cold War Security Policy in Northeast Asia,” *Pacific Affairs* Vol.67, No.4 (Winter 1994-95), p.501; Cha and Choi, “Land-based Confidence-Building Measures,” p.250.

During Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Moscow in September 1994, the two countries took a significant step forward in signing the Joint Statement Pertaining to the Non-Targeting of the Strategic Nuclear Weapons at and Non-First Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Each Other. By detargeting nuclear weapons aimed at each other's territory and pledging NFU, the two countries confirmed an earlier understanding of no longer viewing each other as a security threat and moved a long way toward enhancing mutual trust.³⁹

Exchange Visits of Defense Ministers and Military Cooperation

Frequent exchanges of visits between defense ministers and other high-ranking military officials have resulted not only in the improved military-to-military relationship and cooperation (Russian arms sales and military technology transfers to China being the most prominent) but also in the codification of specific CBMs covering a wide range of areas. In May 1991, Soviet Defense Minister Dimitri Yazov visited Beijing. During the visit, the two countries acknowledged that they no longer perceived a threat from each other.⁴⁰ Chinese Defense Minister Qin Jiwei visited Moscow in August 1992 and discussed troop deployments along the border regions and reduction in both sides' far eastern regions with his counterpart Pavel Grachev.⁴¹

In November 1993, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev visited China, with the two sides signing a five-year agreement on military cooperation. This document provides for a number of information, interaction, and communications CBMs, including regular consultations between top defense ministry officials, exchange of information regarding border-area troop maneuvers, and direct ties between adjoining Russian and Chinese military districts.⁴² This achieved, the two countries moved on to areas of constraining CBMs. During his visit to Moscow in July 1994, Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian and Grachev signed an Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Between the Chinese and Russian Governments. A number of specific areas are covered by the agreement including, among others, safeguards against an accidental missile launch, bans on the use of eye-damaging lasers, the ending of electronic jamming of communications, and the establishment of an early-warning system against inadvertent intrusion of the other's borders by aircraft and ships.⁴³

There have been exchanges of port visits and observers to military exercises. Chinese PLAN's (the People's Liberation Army Navy) North Fleet visited Vladivostok in May 1994, a visit which was reciprocated by units from the Russian Pacific Fleet at Qingdao in August the same year. Chinese officers also visited the Transbaikalian Military District in September 1994. There have also been agreements on joint naval exercises. Observers were invited by both sides to attend borderguard military exercises. As well, there have been increases in invitations to attend each other's festival celebrations, cultural activities, and sports games.⁴⁴

Other noted CBMs include the agreement on cooperation in border defense, signed in August 1995 between China's Ministry of National Defense and the Russian Federal Border Guard Administration, and exchanges of visits between China's Jilin and Heilongjiang provincial military districts and Inner Mongolia military district and Russia's Pacific, Far East, and Rear Baykal Border Guard Districts. According to one Chinese source, the two sides have been engaged in various discussion on a very regular basis, testified by nearly 1,000 meetings and more than 5,000 rounds of talks.⁴⁵

³⁹ Shi, "On Sino-Russian Relations in the New Era," pp.1-8; Moltz, "Regional Tensions," p.519.

⁴⁰ Cha and Choi, "Land-based Confidence-Building Measures," p.249.

⁴¹ *JDW*, 5 September 1992, p.24.

⁴² Meyer, "Russia's Post-Cold War," pp.501-502.

⁴³ Moltz, "Regional Tensions," p.518; Menon, "Strategic Convergence," p.108.

⁴⁴ Menon, "Strategic Convergence," pp.108-109; Moltz, "Regional Tensions," p.519; "PRC: 'Friendly Revolution' on Russian Border Viewed," *Xinhua* (Beijing), 24 April 1996, in *FBIS-CHI*, 29 April 1996, p.11.

⁴⁵ Yang Guojun, "Good-Neighborly, Friendly, Peaceful, and Tranquil Sino-Russian Border," *Xinhua Domestic Service*, 21 April 1996, in *FBIS-CHI*, 22 April 1996, p.22.

Working-Level Negotiations

At the working level, negotiating teams focused on specific issues including: the area of application; coverage of force units, personnel strength and equipment; and specificity regarding information exchanges, observations, notifications, and other constraining measures. The two sides decided in 1991 that the zone of military CBMs would be 100 km on each side of the border, a zone behind which their troops should be pulled back. At the eighth round of negotiations, it was further decided that offensive weapons, such as tanks, strike aircraft, artillery and tactical nuclear weapons, required to be pulled back beyond the 200-km zone, resulting in the transfers (or even destruction) of certain weapons. China originally had wanted to establish a zone extending to 300 km on either side of the border, but negotiations were stuck over issues of where to relocate the withdrawn Russian troops, as well as the more strategic consideration that a demilitarized zone of wider breadth would have meant Russian pull-back in certain parts behind the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁴⁶

Border arms control talks underwent more than 20 rounds over a period of seven years between the five nations and covered a wide range of issues including storage of strategic weapons within the 100 km area along the border, reduction of land and air forces, and border security.⁴⁷ Initially the two sides targeted simultaneous conclusion of both military CBMs and force reductions. However, the difficulties encountered in the latter sphere led to the decision to “sign a separate accord on CBMs as a transitional document on the way to the overall CBM and troop reduction treaty.”⁴⁸ Hence the Shanghai Agreement signed in April 1996, which provided for the pledge of non-aggression, non-use of force, notifications preceding military exercises and other military maneuvers, and limits on the number and types of exercises permitted within the 100 km-zone.⁴⁹ An agreement at the conclusion of the 22nd round of negotiations held in Beijing, 11-27 December 1996, finalized the specifics of force reductions and the Moscow Agreement was signed in May 1997.⁵⁰

Several features stand out regarding the development of Sino-Russian CBMs over the past seven years, one of which is incrementalism. Rather than negotiating a package deal all at once, there have been many “building blocks” along the way toward the Shanghai and Moscow Agreements. This less than grand-scale approach has made it possible to make progress rather than letting a particular obstacle stall the entire process. The decision to separate the CBMs agreement and the force reduction agreement is a good case in point.

A second characteristic is the apparent “informality” (at least compared with the Helsinki process and the negotiations on the Vienna Document) with which many substantive measures were achieved. The most significant has been the force reductions in broader Sino-Russian border areas that were undertaken more in a unilateral fashion (whatever the underlying rationale) rather than as the result of painstaking and drawn-out negotiations like the Mutual and Balanced force Reduction (MBFR) in Europe. Indeed, as Gerald Segal pointed out, “What is striking about these cuts is that none of these reductions... have been negotiated. It was only after the official normalization of relations in May 1989 that formal talks began between the two governments on arms control and confidence-building measures.”⁵¹ One could suggest, as did two Korean analysts, that the negotiation history shows

a distinctive pattern and procedure: informal, with a sequence of one side’s unilateral actions reciprocated by the other side. Arms reductions along the Sino-Soviet border, in fact, preceded the full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. The formal agreement on mutual reductions of

⁴⁶ See, for example, Trevor Findlay, “Sino/Soviet Border Talks,” *Pacific Research* Vol.4, No.1 (February 1991), p.13; Matt Forney and Nayan Chanda, “Comrades in Arms,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (hereafter *FEER*), 2 May 1996, p.17; Moltz, “Regional Tensions,” p.518; Menon, “Strategic Convergence,” p.107.

⁴⁷ *Yearbook of Chinese Communism 1996*, p.9.18.

⁴⁸ Leonid P. Moiseyev, “The Prospect for Force Reductions in the Zone of Application of the CBM Agreement Between China and Russia,” in Robert E. Bedeski, ed., *Confidence Building in the North Pacific: New Approaches to the Korean Peninsula in the Multilateral Context* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria and Korean Institute for Defense Analyses, December 1996), p.198.

⁴⁹ Menon, “Strategic Convergence,” p.108.

⁵⁰ Robert Karniol, “China concludes border pact,” *JDW*, 15 January 1997, p.12.

⁵¹ Gerald Segal, “A New Order in Northeast Asia,” *Arms Control Today* Vol.21, No.7 (September 1991), p.14.

military forces in border areas and the guidelines for enhancing trust in the military field have come after the substantial reduction of forces in border areas has taken place. Each side has taken into account the other's security concerns and taken measures to eliminate them. In a word, at the initial phase the Soviet Union and China utilized arms control to strengthen the groundwork of the Sino-Soviet détente.⁵²

Yet another element, unique to the Sino-Russian negotiations on arms reductions, is counterintuitive to what most would regard as the serious obstacle to CBMs: asymmetry in capacity. "If disparity in the size, resources, population or military capacity of countries creates a sense of insecurity in many areas, it can also represent a formidable obstacle to developing CBMs."⁵³ As the preceding discussion may already have made clear, it seems that "[t]he party which has a superiority in any field would make bigger corresponding reductions. Offensive components of armed forces will be first subject to reductions."⁵⁴ In both regards, China clearly is the weaker of the two parties and Soviet/Russian willingness to undertake asymmetrical reductions should be regarded as a contributing factor in the success of Sino-Russian CBMs. Amitav Acharya summarizes it thus:

progress has been achieved in a gradual, step-by-step manner, with the comprehensive and detailed agreement preceded by an agreement on basic principles, such as that of non-use of force. Another aspect is that an initial reduction of forces in border areas (an arms control measure) preceded agreement on measures to improve confidence. In sum, the Shanghai Agreement shows that unilateral arms control measures can be an important catalyst of long-term bilateral CBMs.⁵⁵

Finally, the crucial factor, as already noted by commentators on the issue of CBMs, is the importance of political commitments. As observed earlier, CBMs are obtainable and meaningful only to the extent that the broader political context permits. A recent study suggests: "CBMs are only as strong as the fundamental political will for compromise in any successful negotiations. Without pre-existing détente, CBMs are of little value."⁵⁶ In the Sino-Russian case, the broader political context can be very important. As has been emphasized by the Chinese, the Shanghai accord is dictated by political considerations. In other words, it was the Deng-Gorbachev Summit in 1989 that made it possible, and indeed worthwhile, for the two sides to move the negotiations forward and bring to conclusion an interim agreement.⁵⁷ It has been pointed out that

both countries share a desire to reduce tension along the border in order to focus their attention elsewhere. Russia at the current time simply cannot afford to maintain border troops and arms at the level of the earlier Sino-Soviet confrontation. With the threat along the Russian border reduced, China is better able to focus its resources on economic modernization and to assert its interests in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁸

IV. Sino-Russian CBMs: Strengths and Weaknesses

An assessment of any CBM would inevitably be predicated on the selection of criteria. As is now generally accepted, CBMs have undergone several stages of development with an expanded scope of objectives, from the initial primary concerns over surprise military attacks to the current orientation toward transforming security relationships. A first task in our exercise, then, must begin with an analysis of the nature of Sino-Russian CBMs, in particular as they are reflected in the Shanghai and Moscow

⁵² Cha and Choi, "Land-based Confidence-Building Measures," p.250.

⁵³ Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures*, p.30.

⁵⁴ Moiseyev, "The Prospect for Force Reductions," p.195.

⁵⁵ Amitav Acharya, *The ASEAN Regional Forum: Confidence-Building* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, February 1997), pp.16-17.

⁵⁶ Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures*, p.5.

⁵⁷ Comments by Chinese participants during the Canada-China seminar on Asia-Pacific multilateralism and cooperative security, Ottawa, 30 January 1997, and the Canada-China seminar on arms control and confidence building, Beijing, 23 May 1997.

⁵⁸ Herbert J. Ellison and Bruce A. Acker, *The New Russia and Asia: 1991-1995*. NBR Analysis Vol.7, No.1 (June 1996), p.36.

Agreements. An obvious caveat, though, is that given the early stage of implementation and the scarcity of information pertaining to the force reduction accord, the analysis will tend to be highly tentative and at best speculative. What can be realistically achieved is an assessment of the Shanghai accord in comparison with established similar documents such as the Vienna Document and in comparison with some of the major characteristics analysts have proscribed for CBMs in general. Appendix II offers some elements of such a comparison.

Clearly, one of the primary objectives for any CBM effort would be to help reduce tension, especially in the military field through such mechanisms as information exchanges, notification of major military maneuvers, and constraining provisions making surprise attacks more easily identifiable if not completely eradicated. By their very nature, CBMs aim to address perception problems, concerns, and the risks of inadvertent escalation of crisis. These are hoped in the long run to be able to contribute to peace and stability.⁵⁹ In contrast to this minimalist interpretation of what CBMs can expect to achieve are views that confidence building as a process can transform inter-state security relationships positively when supportive conditions exist.⁶⁰ We will assess the Sino-Russian CBMs as they are codified in the Shanghai Agreement as being able to perform, or having already performed, these tasks.

Sino-Russian CBMs in the military field pertain to two levels of applicability. The series of agreements, joint statements, and understandings between 1990 and 1997 are related to issues of general principles and govern overall politico-military relationships. The two accords, on the other hand, address specific issues and only apply to the armed forces and military activities on both sides of the border areas between China and Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The Chinese refer to the two agreements *duo guo shuang bian*, which is bilateral in nature but with more than two participants.⁶¹

The Shanghai Agreement features many provisions that are similar to those found in the Vienna Document. Given Soviet/Russian extensive involvement in the negotiating and drafting of the latter Document, it can be suggested that Sino-Russian CBM negotiations present some learning experiences for the Chinese. A quick perusal of the Shanghai Agreements reveals seven broad areas of coverage:

- military forces deployed in the border region will not attack each other;
- military exercises will not be targeted at each other;
- the scale, scope, and number of military exercises will be restricted;
- there will be information exchanges between and notification of the other party as regards important military activities carried out within 100 km of the border, with individual concerns receiving proper explanations;
- invitations will be extended to each other to observe military exercises of certain scales;
- the two sides should make efforts to prevent dangerous military activities; and
- friendly exchanges between military forces and frontier guards in the border region will be strengthened.⁶²

The Moscow Agreement, the details of which are yet to be publicized, focuses on “the reduction of regular troops, *though not border guards or strategic forces*, within a 100-kilometer zone on either side of the former Sino-Soviet boundary. The new limit of 13,400 soldiers on either side is thought to be close to the numbers now deployed.”⁶³

⁵⁹ Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures*.

⁶⁰ James Macintosh, *Confidence Building in the Arms Control Process: A Transformation View* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1996).

⁶¹ “PRC: Spokesman Says 5-Nation Accord Not ‘Military Alliance’,” Beijing Central Television Program, 26 April 1996, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service: Daily Report - China* (hereafter *FBIS-CHI*), 29 April 1996, p.7; “Epoch-Making Significance of the Five-Nation Border Agreement,” *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), 26 April 1996, p.A2, in *FBIS-CHI*, 29 April 1996, pp.8-9.

⁶² For the complete text of the Shanghai Agreement, see Document One, “Agreement Between the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the People’s Republic of China on Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Border Area,” in Robert E. Bedeski, ed., *Confidence Building in the North Pacific: New Approaches to the Korean Peninsula in the Multilateral Context* (Victoria: University of Victoria and the Korean Institute for Defense Analyses, December 1996), pp.245-256; See also, Shih Chun-yu, “Shanghai Agreement Is of Profound Significance,” *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), 29 April 1996, p.A3, in *FBIS-CHI*, 30 April 1996, p.7; “An Agreement That Has Become the Focus of World Attention,” *Renmin Ribao*, 27 April 1996, p.1, in *FBIS-CHI*, 30 April 1996, p.6.

⁶³ Sophie Quinn-Judge, “Common Cause: Russia and China join hands for mutual benefit,” *FEER*, 8 May 1997, p.16, emphasis added.

There are a number of differences between the Shanghai Agreement and the Vienna Document. Acharya points out:

First, with some exceptions, the provisions of the former are much less elaborate and specific than the Vienna Document. Second, the constraining measures contained in the Shanghai Agreement are rudimentary when compared to the Vienna Document. Third and most importantly, the Shanghai Agreement provides for no compliance and verification provisions (limited to voluntary hosting of visits to clarify developments considered ambiguous by the other party).⁶⁴

There may be several possible explanations. One is the fact that the Shanghai Agreement and the Vienna Document were negotiated under different circumstances. The former is the result of political good will and reflects the determination of Beijing and Moscow to nurture a strategic partnership at a time when both see the need to consolidate their relations against the backgrounds of NATO expansion and a review of the US-Japanese security alliance. In this respect, a concluded agreement serves as a token of an already improved relationship more than being aimed at constraining each other's military activities. By contrast, the more elaborate and detailed provisions contained in the Vienna Document must be seen as coming from the early generation of European CBMs where a great deal of emphasis was placed upon constraining mechanisms. In other words, one can argue that the less trust between the negotiating partners, the more reassurance and comprehensiveness are required of CBM provisions.⁶⁵

Another explanation may be China's resistance to more elaborate and constraining CBMs. It has already been pointed out that the Chinese have emphasized the limited applicability and situation-specificity of the Shanghai Agreement strictly within the 100-km border areas. Following a holistic approach toward arms control and confidence building in general, China is more interested in the broader context in which specific CBMs are conditioned and developed. China has come a long way toward gradually accepting the widely accepted practices that have characterized East-West negotiations over the past two decades.

Finally, the geographical conditions are also different. By comparison, Europe represents a much smaller area for the high concentration of military forces on both sides of the East-West divide. There was a much shorter response time and smaller space for maneuvers as far as military activities were concerned. Consequently, constraining measures are more important and detailed provisions are of greater necessity for reassurance. Verification is of crucial importance, in particular given the multilateral nature of the Document. As the Shanghai Agreement pertains only to the 100 km of the border areas where force deployments have already been reduced to a low level, elaborated provisions and detailed verification procedures may be less practical.

In sum, as Segal observed, back in the early days of Sino-Soviet negotiations, "it seems likely that a formal treaty, when complete, will not do much more than codify the cuts already made and the confidence-building measures previously agreed upon.... [A] very limited verification mechanism will probably be agreed to, although neither side sees this as vital - a sharp contrast to the CFE process."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Acharya, *ASEAN Regional Forum: Confidence-Building*, p.18.

⁶⁵ Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures*, p.19.

⁶⁶ Segal, "A New Order in Northeast Asia," p.15.

V. Concluding Remarks

The prospects for implementing Sino-Russian CBMs are mixed. On the positive side, there is strong political commitment at the highest level in both capitals to make them work. On the other hand, there remain unresolved issues and obstacles. First, there is “a growing gap between the positive perception of bilateral relations in Moscow and the increasingly negative view of the local Russian Far Eastern population, which could ultimately undermine the rapprochement.”⁶⁷ This includes two elements. One is the different reaction toward the bilateral relationship at the local level. Within the Russian Far East, there are concerns over the predominant Chinese presence in trade, investment, and immigration (some illegal). This can easily arouse nationalist sentiments and anti-Chinese feelings, which in turn may complicate the implementation of CBMs. Indeed, Russian public opinion may not be well disposed toward China. And the key elements of a strategic partnership are lacking. Bilateral trade still lags behind the political relationship, with an annual turnover of only \$7 billion (compared to \$63.5 billion in Sino-US trade).⁶⁸

The second element concerns the unresolved border issues. There are, among other things, disagreements between the local authorities and the Russian federal government in Moscow on the exact demarcation of the bordering regions, with some regional governments challenging the legal validity of Russian-Chinese border treaties.⁶⁹ There are demands from local politicians, and even from members of the State Duma, that the agreement on the eastern sector of the Sino-Russian border be renounced.⁷⁰ The fact that the recently concluded Sino-Russian demarcation treaty still leaves the status of a number of islands unsettled is clear testimony to the difficulty in fully resolving the border issue.

Implementing the troop reduction agreement will also pose some problems for Russia. One such problem is the lack of infrastructure for redeployed troops; the repositioning of these troops would exert significant pressure on housing and employment. It also means that troops will have to be withdrawn behind the trans-Siberian railway, a vital supply line to the Far East.⁷¹

However, the key issue is whether or not the current “strategic partnership” between China and Russia, is a solid one and here to stay. The partnership derives significantly from both countries’ shared resentment over Washington’s apparent attempts to force its own policy agenda on Beijing and Moscow.⁷² The grievances are easily identified. Moscow feels the threat of NATO expansion and is annoyed by excessive US pressure in the areas of arms sales and technology transfers. Beijing, on the other hand, is running into conflicts with Washington over a number of issues: trade, intellectual property rights, human rights, arms sales and, increasingly, a US-Taiwan policy that, from China’s perspective, deviates from the “one China” principle.⁷³ One analyst observes that the new entente between Russia and China “could thus be seen as the modern, Eastern version of Rapallo, a treaty concluded between Germany and Russia in the 1920s that symbolized a pact between two continental powers united by their real or imagined grievances against the West.”⁷⁴ It is within such a context that the Sino-Russian strategic partnership must be viewed. As one Chinese analyst points out: “[t]heir shared goal is to make the US take a step back.” And the close cooperation with Russia is designed in part to “get Washington’s attention.”⁷⁵ This also explains why Moscow and Beijing have gone out their way in supporting each other’s key positions: China sympathizes with Russia’s concern over NATO expansion and treats the

⁶⁷ Moltz, “Regional Tensions,” pp.512-513.

⁶⁸ Menon, “The Strategic Convergence Between Russia and China,” pp.105-107; “Dance of Giants,” p.14.

⁶⁹ Menon, “Strategic Convergence,” pp.103-105.

⁷⁰ Peter Lewis Young, “China may look again at ‘unequal treaties’,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* Vol.8, No.7 (July 1996), p.327.

⁷¹ Menon, “Strategic Convergence,” p.107.

⁷² Peter Ford, “Russia, China Find A Cause Against West,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 April 1997, pp.1, 8.

⁷³ Herbert J. Ellison and Bruce A. Acker, *The New Russia and Asia: 1991-1995*. NBR Analysis Vol.7, No.1 (June 1996), p.35.

⁷⁴ Hung P. Nguyen, “Russia and China: The genesis of an Eastern Rapallo,” *Asian Survey* Vol.XXXIII, No.3 (March 1993), p.286.

⁷⁵ Matt Forney and Nayan Chanda, “Comrades in Arms,” *FEER*, 2 May 1996, p.17.

fighting in Chechnya an internal affair; Russia on its part declares Taiwan and Tibet inalienable parts of China.⁷⁶

The question remains whether certain assumptions are themselves not beyond doubt.⁷⁷ If we accept the thesis that CBMs are only meaningful with the strong political commitments of the parties involved, then the implementation of the Shanghai and Moscow Agreements may conceivably be influenced by the durability of the Sino-Russian bilateral relationship which, for all intents and purposes, is one of convenience, or, what Menon has termed, of “strategic convergence,” and “sustained not by trust and goodwill but by calculated self-interest and a desire for leverage vis-à-vis third parties, especially the United States.”⁷⁸ If anything, the strategic partnership can be more realistically called “ties of convenience,” currently sustained by both countries’ resentment of the United States and by Russia’s transfers of military hardware and technology.⁷⁹ It has already been suggested that “despite the enormous strikes, the relationship has not yet evolved into a partnership, strategic or otherwise,” since “strategic linkups are formed to encompass worldwide issues, not just bilateral ones.”⁸⁰ This may in the end serve as testimony to the strengths and weaknesses of the Shanghai and Moscow Agreements.

⁷⁶ Rod Mickleburgh, “Sino-Russian summit a buddy affair,” *The Globe and Mail*, 26 April 1996, p.A16; “Sino-Russian Relations as Viewed in Moscow,” *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), 28 April 1996, p.A2, in *FBIS-CHI*, 29 April 1996, p.12.

⁷⁷ For a dubious view, see “Russia and China: Can a bear love a dragon?” *The Economist*, 26 April 1997, pp.19-21.

⁷⁸ Menon, “Strategic Convergence,” p.101; see also, Huang, “A Study of Sino-Russian Relations,” p.15.

⁷⁹ Nigel Holloway with Charles Bickers, “Brothers in Arms,” *FEER*, 13 March 1997, pp.20-21; Sophie Quinn-Judge, “Common Cause: Russia and China join hands for mutual benefit,” *FEER*, 8 May 1997, pp.15-16.

⁸⁰ “Dance of Giants,” *Asiaweek*, 9 May 1997, p.14.

Appendix I. Evolution of Sino-Russian CBMs⁸¹

Date	Development
October 1985	USSR proposed specific measures including advance notification of military exercises and the withdrawal of troops from border areas
July 1986	In his famous Vladivostok Speech, Soviet leader Gorbachev offered China a number of concession: acceptance of the middle channel principle for the demarcation of border rivers, and reduction of Soviet military forces along the Sino-Soviet border and in Mongolia
February 1989	Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze proposed that the two countries set up a joint group of diplomatic and military experts to discuss reductions of troops and offensive weapons, limitations of military exercises, and establishment of verification procedures
May 1989	Full normalization of bilateral relations was restored during Gorbachev's visit to China; Gorbachev formally proposed that the two countries work toward trans-forming the border region into a zone of peaceful interaction
April 1990	Chinese Premier Li Peng visited the Soviet Union and signed an Agreement on the Guidelines of Mutual Reductions of Forces and Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Area of the Soviet-Chinese Border. The two sides pledged to "reduce their military forces to the lowest level suited to normal good neighborly relations between the two countries on an equal basis for mutual security."
May 1991	Soviet Defense Minister Dimitri Yazov's visit to Beijing produced acknowledgment by the two sides that they no longer viewed each other as a security threat
May 1991	Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Moscow and the two countries signed the Agreement on the Eastern Section of the Boundary Between the People's Republic of China and the USSR
August 1992	Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev affirmed to visiting Chinese Defense Minister Qin Jiwei that Moscow would honor its commitments on military-to-military exchanges and other undertakings. They discussed other security measures such as Russian arms sales to china, transparency in troop deployments along their border and further troop reductions
December 1992	Russian President Boris Yeltsin visited Beijing and signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Guiding Principles for the Mutual Reductions of Armed Forces and the Strengthening of Trust in the Border Region. The two sides re-affirmed that they would reduce the armed forces along the border to the lowest level commensurate with friendly relations
November 1993	Grachev visited China and the two sides signed a five-year agreement on military cooperation providing regular consultation, closer military ties, and information exchanges on border troop maneuvers
July 1994	Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian visited Moscow and the Agreement on the Prevention of

⁸¹ Acharya, *ASEAN Regional Forum: Confidence Building*, p.16, and author's own compilation based on sources cited in this paper.

	Dangerous Military Activities Between the Chinese and Russian Governments was signed providing a number of constraining CBMs
September 1994	Jiang Zemin visited Moscow and two important documents were signed: the Agreement on the Western Section of the Boundary Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation; and the Joint Statement Pertaining to the Non-Targeting of Strategic Nuclear Weapons at and Non-First Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Each Other
August 1995	Agreement on Cooperation in Border Defense was signed by Chinese Ministry of National Defense and the Russian Federation Border Guard Administration
April 1996	China, Russia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan signed in Shanghai the Agreement on Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Border Area
May 1997	China, Russia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan signed in Moscow an agreement on reductions of forces in the border area

Appendix II
Comparison of the Shanghai Agreement
and the Vienna Document⁸²

Issue Area	Shanghai Agreement	Vienna Document
Underlying Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparency in the military field - Mutual non-aggression - Non-use of force - Peace and stability - Force reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparency in the military field - Non-use of force or threat of use of force
Geographic Area of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100 km from border line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole of Europe, adjoining sea area and air space
Force Reductions/ Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflected in military activities/ exercises parameters below 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflected in military activities/ exercise parameters below
Military Activities/ Exercises Parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within 100 km: no exercises of more than 40,000 pers. (Eastern Section. 4,000 pers. and/or 50 tanks (Western Section) - Within 15 km: no more than 1 regt. in live-fire exercise - Within 10 km: border guards only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every 2 calendar years: no more than 1 military activity involving more than 40,000 pers. or 900 tanks - Each year: no more than 3 military activities involving more than 25,000 pers. or 400 tanks - Simultaneously: no more than 3 military activities involving more than 13,000 pers. or 300 tanks
Notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (10 days in advance) - Exercises exceeding 25,000 pers. - Exercises which include. 9,000 pers. and/or 250 tanks from outside the border area - Exercises in the border area which include. 9,000 reserves - Voluntary notification of any exercise involving more than 9,000 pers. or 250 tanks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (at least 42 days in advance) - Activities involving 9,000 or more pers. or 250 or more tanks or 200 or more aircraft sorties - Amphibious or parachute landings involving 3,000 or more pers. - Transfer into or to a point of concentration within the zone of application of 13,000 or more pers. or 300 or more tanks or 3,500 or more para-troop/amphibious pers. - Changes to information provided on an annual basis (by the time activation occurs) - Activities carried out without advance notice to the troops involved
Information Exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual exchange on main categories of equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual exchanges on military organization, designation and subordi-

⁸² Modified from Acharya, *ASEAN Regional Forum: Confidence Building*, Table 5, pp.20-23.

	- Personnel strength (include. ground forces, air force, air defense aviation, border guard troops)	nation of units, manpower, major categories of equipment, planned troop increase, purposes and start/end dates of unit increase/activities, HQ locations, military budgets, planned notifiable military activities and plans for deploying major equipment systems
Equipment Specifications	- Battle tanks, armored vehicles, artillery systems (greater than 122mm), aircraft, helicopters, tactical missile launchers	- Battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, APC and armored infantry fighting vehicle look-alike, anti-tank guided missile launchers permanently/integrally mounted on armored vehicles, self-propelled and towed artillery, mortars and multiple rocket launchers (100mm and above), armored vehicle launched bridges, combat aircraft, helicopters
Observations	- To exercises involving more than 35,000 pers. - voluntary invitation to exercises involving more than 13,000 pers., 300 tanks	- To all notifiable military activities - To demonstrations of new types of major equipment systems when first introduced into the zone of application - States may conduct inspections (subject to quota limits) - States to provide opportunities for visits to active formations/units to allow evaluation of information provided (subject to quota limits)
Exchange/Cooperation	- Experience exchange (construction, training, etc.) - Cooperation in logistics, etc. - Other forms of cooperation, e.g. mutual participation in national holidays, athletic and cultural events	- Exchanges/visits of senior military/defense representatives and military commanders - Contacts between military institutions - Attendance on courses of instruction - Exchanges/contacts between academics/military experts - Sporting/cultural events contacts
Consultations	- Request and response about ambiguous situations within 7 days - Mutual visits of	- Reporting and clarifying hazardous incidents of a military nature

	<p>military commanders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study tours by expert groups - Experts meetings to discuss implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consult and cooperation within 48 hrs on unusual/unscheduled significant military activities occurring outside normal peacetime locations - Annual implementation assessment meeting - Establishment of Conflict Prevention Center - Voluntary invitations on visits to dispel concerns about military activities
CBMs	- Confidence-building in the military field	- Confidence-building in the military field